



Uncle George's Nose

Dad walked to school with me after lunch today. I like it when Dad goes with me, because he often gives me money to buy things, and that's what he did today. We were passing the toyshop, and I looked in the window and saw those cardboard noses you can put on your face to make your friends laugh.

'Oh, Dad, do buy me a nose!' I said. Dad said no, he wouldn't, I didn't need a nose, but I showed him a big red one and I said, 'Oh, please, Dad! Buy me that nose, it's just like Uncle George's!'

Uncle George is Dad's brother; he's fat and he tells a lot of stories, and he's always laughing. We don't see him very often because he travels around selling things in faraway places, Lyon and Marseille and Bordeaux. Dad started to laugh.

'You're right,' said Dad, 'it is like a smaller version of George's nose! I'll put it on next time he comes to see us!'

And then we went into the shop and bought the nose, and I put it on. It had an elastic band to keep it in place. Then Dad put it on, and then the lady in the shop put it back on me, and we all looked at ourselves in the mirror and laughed a lot. I don't care what you say, my Dad is great!

When he left me at the school gates, Dad said, 'Now, be good; try not to make any trouble with George's nose.' I promised and I went into school.





I saw our gang in the playground, and I put on my nose to show them and we all laughed a lot.

'It's like my Auntie Claire's nose,' said Max.

'No, it's my Uncle George's nose,' I said. 'You remember – my uncle the explorer.'

'Lend me that nose, will you?' Eddie asked.

'No!' I said. 'Ask your own Dad to buy a nose if you want one!'

'If you don't lend it, I'm going to punch it!' said Eddie, who is very strong, and biff! he punched Uncle George's nose.

It didn't hurt, but I was afraid Eddie might have broken Uncle George's nose, so I put it in my pocket and I kicked him. We were in the middle of fighting and the rest of the gang were watching, when Old Spuds came chasing up. Old Spuds is one of the teachers, and some day I'll tell you why we call him Spuds.

'What's going on here?' asked Old Spuds.

'It's Eddie!' I said. 'He punched my nose and he broke it!'

Old Spuds seemed very surprised, and he bent down with his face right next to mine and he said, 'Let's have a look ...'

So I took Uncle George's nose out of my pocket and showed him. I don't know why, but the sight of Uncle George's nose made him very angry.

'Boy, look me in the eye!' said Old Spuds, standing up again. 'I don't stand for people making fun of me, my young friend! You'll stay in after school today, understand?'

I started to cry, and Geoffrey said, 'Please, sir, it wasn't his fault, sir.'

Old Spuds looked at Geoffrey and smiled and patted his shoulder.

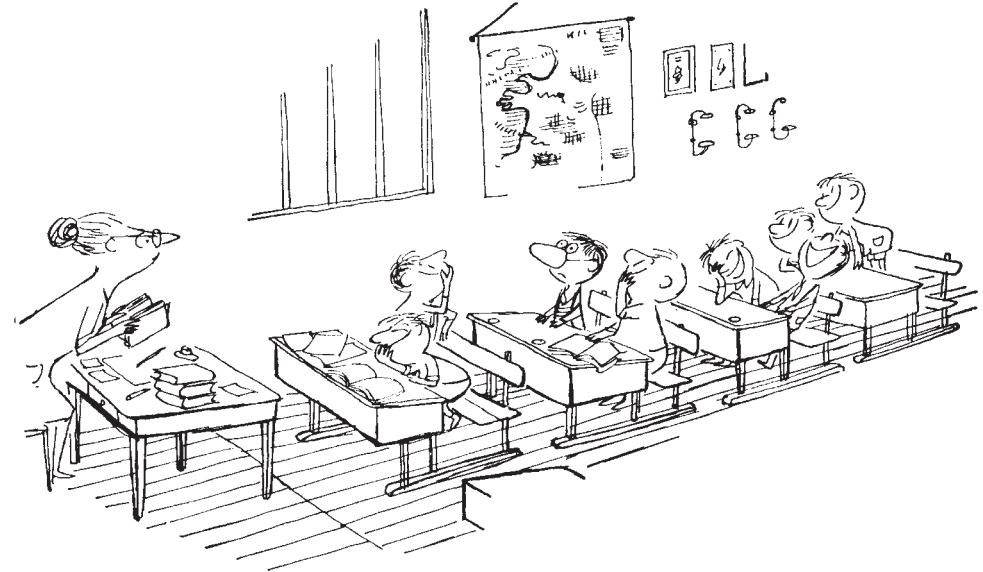
'Confessing to save a friend, eh? Well done, my boy!'

'Well, it wasn't his fault,' said Geoffrey, 'it was Eddie's fault.'



Old Spuds went bright red. He opened and shut his mouth several times before he said anything, and then he gave Eddie detention and he gave Geoffrey detention and he gave Matthew detention for laughing. And he went off to ring the bell.

Back in the classroom, our teacher began telling us things about when France was full of Gauls. Alec, who was sitting next to me, asked if Uncle George's nose was really broken. I said no, just a bit squashed at the end, and I took it out of my pocket to see if I could put it right. And when I pushed my



finger inside it, I managed to get it back into the same shape it was before, so I was very pleased.

‘Put it on, to make sure,’ said Alec.

So I bent down under my desk and put the nose on. Alec took a look and said, ‘That’s OK, it’s fine.’

‘Nicholas! Tell me what I have been saying,’ said our teacher suddenly. She gave me a nasty fright.

I sat up very suddenly, and I felt like crying, because I hadn’t the faintest idea what our teacher had just been saying and she doesn’t like people not listening to her. Our teacher stared at me, very surprised, like Old Spuds.

‘What on earth have you got on your face?’ she asked me.

‘It’s the nose Dad bought me,’ I explained, crying.

Our teacher was cross, and she started to shout and say she disliked clowns, and if I carried on like this I should get expelled from school and finish up an ignoramus and be a disgrace to my parents, and then she said, ‘Bring me that nose!’

So I went and put it on her desk, still crying, and she said she was confiscating it, and then she told me to write fifty lines saying, ‘I must not bring cardboard noses into History with the aim of playing the fool and making my friends misbehave.’

When I got home, Mum looked at me and she said, ‘Whatever is the matter with you, Nicholas? You do look pale!’ So I started to cry, and I told her how Old Spuds had given me detention when I took Uncle George’s nose out of my pocket, and how our teacher had given me fifty lines to write because of Uncle George’s nose, and then she had gone and confiscated it. Mum looked very startled, and then she put a hand on my forehead and said I’d better go and lie down for a bit and rest.

When Dad came home from the office, Mum told him, ‘I’ve been so worried, I could hardly wait for you to get home! Nicholas came back from school in a very odd, nervous condition. I wonder if I ought to call the doctor for him?’

‘I might have known it!’ said Dad. ‘And I did warn him, too! I bet that little wretch has been fooling around with old George’s nose!’

And then we were all very worried, because Mum felt ill and we had to call the doctor for her.





My Watch

When I got back from school yesterday, afternoon the postman had brought a parcel for me. It was a present from Granny.

A fantastic present! You'll never guess what it was – a watch! My Granny is really great, and so is my watch, and the rest of the gang will be terribly impressed. Dad wasn't at home because he had a business dinner that evening, but Mum showed me how to wind the watch and she put it on my wrist. Luckily, I'm very good at telling the time, not like last year when I was little and I'd have had to go round asking people what my watch said all the time, which would have been a bit tricky. The really good thing about my watch was the big hand which went round much faster than the other two; you can't see them move at all unless you look very hard for a very long time. I asked Mum what the big hand was for, and she said it was very useful for telling you when boiled eggs were done.

It was a pity there weren't any boiled eggs when Mum and I sat down to our supper at 7.32 p.m. I kept looking at my watch while I ate, and Mum told me to hurry up or my soup would get cold, so I finished my soup in exactly the time it took the biggest hand to go round twice and a bit. At 7.51 p.m. Mum brought in the end of the yummy pudding left over from lunch-time, and we finished supper at 7.58 p.m. Mum let

me play for a bit. I held the watch to my ear to hear it tick, and at 8.15 p.m. Mum told me to go to bed. I felt as happy as I did that time I was given the fountain pen which made blots everywhere! I wanted to keep my watch on when I went to sleep, but Mum told me it wouldn't be good for it, so I put it on my bedside table where I could see it quite easily if I turned over on my side, and Mum put the light out at 8.38 p.m.

Then it was fantastic, because the numbers and the hands of my watch shone in the dark! I wouldn't have needed to put the light on even if I'd wanted to boil some eggs. I didn't feel like going to sleep. I kept looking at my watch all the time, so I heard when the front door opened. It was Dad coming home. I was very pleased, because now I could show him Granny's present. I got up and put on my watch and went out of my bedroom.

I saw Dad coming upstairs on tiptoe. 'Hey, Dad!' I shouted. 'Look at the lovely watch Granny gave me!' Dad was very startled, so startled he nearly fell downstairs. 'Ssh, Nicholas!' he said. 'Ssh, you'll wake your mother up!' And the light went on and we saw Mum coming out of her bedroom. 'His mother is already awake,' said Mum to Dad, not looking very pleased, and then she asked if this was any time to get home from a business dinner. 'Oh, really!' said Dad. 'It's not all that late.'

'It's exactly 11.58 p.m.,' I said. I felt very proud of myself, because I do like being helpful to Mum and Dad.

'Wonderful presents your mother thinks up, I must say!' Dad told Mum.



'This is a fine time to discuss my mother!' said Mum. 'Especially in front of Nicholas!' She didn't look as if she was standing for any nonsense. Then she told me to go back to bed, darling, and have a nice sleep.

I went back to my room and I heard Dad and Mum talking for a bit, and I started my nice sleep at 12.14 a.m.

I woke up at 5.07 a.m.; it was beginning to get light, which was a pity, because the numbers on my watch didn't shine so brightly then. I was in no hurry to get up because there wasn't any school today, but I told myself I might be able to be helpful to Dad again; he's always complaining that his boss is always complaining that he's late at the office. So I waited a bit and at 5.12 a.m. I went into Mum and Dad's room and I shouted, 'It's morning, Dad! You'll be late for the office!' Dad looked very startled, but it wasn't as dangerous as when he was startled on the stairs, because he couldn't fall downstairs when he was in bed. All the same, Dad did look funny, as if he had fallen downstairs. Mum woke up too, with a jump. 'What is it? What's the matter?' she asked.

'It's that watch of his,' said Dad. 'Apparently, it's morning.'

'That's right,' I said. 'It's 5.15 a.m. Soon it will be 5.16 a.m.'

'Well done, Nicholas,' said Mum, 'and now go back to bed – we're awake, all right.'

I went back to bed, but I had to go back to Mum and Dad three times, at 5.47 a.m., 6.18 a.m. and 7.02 a.m., before they finally got up.

We were sitting down to breakfast and Dad called Mum, 'Hurry up with the coffee, dear, or I shall be late. I've been waiting five minutes now.'

'Eight,' I said, and Mum came in and she looked at me in a funny sort of way. When she poured out the coffee she spilt

some on the tablecloth because her hand was trembling. Poor Mum, I do hope she isn't ill.

'I'll be home in good time for lunch,' said Dad. 'Expect to see me clocking in at the door.' I asked Mum what clocking in meant, but she told me to take no notice and go and play outside.

It's the first time I was ever sorry there was no school, because I wanted to show the gang my watch. The only other person who once came to school with a watch was Geoffrey, who brought his Dad's watch, a big fat one with a lid and a chain. Geoffrey's Dad's watch was great, but it turned out that Geoffrey wasn't supposed to take it and there was a lot of trouble and we never saw that watch again, and Geoffrey told us he got such a thrashing that we jolly nearly never saw him again, either.

I went off to see Alec, my fat friend who lives near me and eats a lot. I know Alec gets up early because it takes him so long to have breakfast. 'Hi, Alec!' I called when I got to his house. 'Alec! Come and see what I've got!' Alec came out with a croissant in his hand and another in his mouth. 'Look, it's a watch!' I told Alec, raising my arm to the level of the end of the croissant which was in his mouth. Alec squinted at it and swallowed and said, 'That's not bad!'

'It goes ever so well and it has a hand for boiling eggs and it shines in the dark,' I told him.

'What does it look like inside?' Alec asked.

I hadn't thought of looking inside. 'Wait a minute,' said Alec, and he went back into his house and came out again with another croissant and a penknife. 'Give me your watch,' said Alec. 'I'll open it up with my knife. I know



how, I've already opened my Dad's watch.' So I gave Alec my watch and he got to work on it with his penknife. Then I was afraid he might break my watch, and I told him, 'Give me my watch back!' But Alec didn't want to, he put out his tongue and went on trying to open the watch. So then I tried to get it back from him by force, and the penknife slipped and cut Alec's finger, and Alec yelled, and the watch came open and it dropped on the ground at 9.10 a.m. It was still 9.10 a.m. when I got home, crying. My watch didn't work any more. Mum hugged me and told me Dad would fix it.

When Dad came home for lunch, Mum gave him my watch. Dad turned the little knob and looked at Mum and looked at the watch and looked at me, and then he said, 'Listen, Nicholas, this watch can't be mended. But that doesn't mean you can't have fun with it, not in the least! You don't have to worry about breaking it now, and it will look just as good as ever on your wrist.' And he looked so pleased and Mum looked so pleased that I was pleased, too.

So now my watch always says four o'clock, which is a nice time, because four o'clock is teatime and we have little chocolate croissants. And the numbers still shine in the dark.

Granny's present is fantastic!

